

Express Scripts Response: Vioxx Withdrawal

- Merck is voluntarily withdrawing Vioxx effective immediately based on a study showing increased risk for cardiovascular events, such as heart attack and stroke, beginning after 18 months of treatment in patient taking Vioxx. This is not a recall, where the FDA mandates the action.
- As a result of Merck's decision to withdraw Vioxx, the medication has been removed from our recommended formulary and we will no longer process prescriptions or refills for it.
- For Vioxx prescriptions that have been sent to an Express Scripts mail pharmacy, which we have begun processing but not yet shipped back to the patient, Express Scripts will call and ask the patient to contact his or her physician. If we have not begun processing the prescription, we will send the patient a letter.
- The formulary Express Scripts recommends to clients includes the alternative COX2 medications Celebrex and Bextra.
- Both Celebrex and Bextra have the same status on the recommended formulary – for example, copayments – as Vioxx. That means there will be no change in copayments if a patient switches to either.
- Our Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee added Celebrex and Bextra to our recommended formulary several months ago.
- A patient will need to contact his or her physician to discuss their use of Vioxx and possible alternative treatments. Physicians will likely be receiving a high volume of calls on this matter so if you do not immediately get through, please keep trying. This is because only your physician can change your prescription.
- Express Scripts will process prescriptions for alternative treatments regardless of how recently a patient filled or refilled a prescription for Vioxx.
- If a patient is using Express Scripts mail pharmacy, physicians should fax new prescriptions for alternative treatments to the physician fax line of the pharmacy they are using. This number is available by calling the toll free number on the back of their prescription benefit card.
- If patients have unused quantities of Vioxx, Merck will reimburse them. Information on receiving reimbursement will be posted on the web at vioxx.com or may be obtained by calling 888-36VIOXX.

- Express Scripts is sending letters to affected patients alerting them to the withdrawal of Vioxx and recommending that they consult their physicians about alternatives.
- For several years, Express Scripts has offered clients programs which encourage first trying a generic nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) before using a branded COX2 drug. Called step therapy, these programs will continue. If a patient had been using Vioxx, they would be able to switch to another COX2 without first having to try a generic.
- Express Scripts will no longer process prior authorization requests for Vioxx because we are no longer processing prescriptions for Vioxx.